

SECTION EIGHT: Agency Best Practices

The Office of Animal Health and Food Safety has reduced staff by 25% (from 155 employees to 117) from August of 2007 to August of 2009. This has been accomplished through attrition, retirement incentive program (detailed in Section Six) and restructuring/consolidation of positions. The reduced office staff has assumed additional responsibilities and workload. Field personnel have been given more responsibilities and larger work areas. Our employees continue to “step-up to the plate” as our mission expands to include even more participation in the Emergency Response for ESF 4 and 11, as well as a comprehensive Loss Prevention Program.

SUSPENDED INDEFINITELY: **NUISANCE ANIMAL CONTROL PROGRAM**

Total Estimated Savings - \$350,000

As previously mandated by R.S. 3:751, the 8 employees of the unfunded Nuisance Animal Control Program captured beavers, nuisance feral swine, coyotes, and coydogs because their activities are detrimental to the land, forests, livestock and farms of this state. This program was instituted as a service to cattlemen and landowners to assist them in reducing flooding of land; disruption of drainage systems; destruction of timber and agricultural crops; and killing of livestock.

Act #24 of the 2009 Legislative Session, allowed for operation of the Nuisance Animal Control Program subject to the availability of funds.

CLOSED LABORATORIES:

1) CLOSED BRUCELLOSIS LAB LOCATED IN BATON ROUGE.

Total Estimated Savings - \$110,000

The Baton Rouge Laboratory located in the LDAF Building in Baton Rouge employed three employees: 1 Vet Tech Supervisor, 1 Vet Tech 2 and 1 Vet Tech Assistant. During the past fiscal year performed the following tests: 93,860 Cattle Brucellosis tests, Rapid Automatic Presumptive Test (RAP), 106 Complement Fixation tests, Card Tests, Rivanol, Standard Plate Test, Particle Concentration Fluorescence Immunoassay Test (PCFIA), 653 Swine Brucellosis tests, RAP Card Test, Deer, Goats and exotics Card Test, 600 Brucella Ring Test (milk samples), and Swine Pseudorabies testing. These testing indices are essential to protect the state and nation from the loss of trade and other economic issues.

2) CLOSED CENTRAL LOUISIANA DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY LOCATED IN ALEXANDRIA.

Total Estimated Savings - \$96,517

During the last fiscal year, the Alexandria Diagnostic Laboratory employed one lab director and one part time veterinarian. The lab handled 2551 Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) tests and 25 microbiology testing were performed for area veterinarians.

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND FORESTRY



OFFICE OF FORESTRY

SEPTEMBER 1, 2009

SUBMITTED BY:
MIKE STRAIN, DVM
COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

COMMISSION ON STREAMLING GOVERNMENT SURVEY

DEPARTMENT: Agriculture & Forestry – Office of Forestry

Section One: Agency Overview

According to R.S. 36:628(F), the Office of Forestry, under the direction of the LDAF commissioner, is responsible for performing the functions of the state relating to the practice of forestry, in accordance with the policies established by the Forestry Commission.

The mission of the Office of Forestry is to protect, conserve, and replenish the forest resources of the state. The Office of Forestry accomplishes its mission through five main branches which are Protection, Management, Information & Education, Reforestation, and Enforcement. The goals of each of those branches are outlined below:

PROTECTION:

- Wildland Fire Detection and Suppression (only agency or entity in the state providing this service)
 - Equipment purchases & maintaining of such equipment, including aircraft
 - Fire-related training
 - Certified Prescribed Burner Certification
 - Buildings and property equipment control.
 - Maintain tower lease agreements
 - National and compact out-of-state dispatches.
- Radio techs install, update and maintain all vehicle and district radios as well as the department's statewide communication system.
- Volunteer Fire Assistance Program provides financial assistance to rural volunteer fire departments throughout the state
- Federal Excess Property Program acquires federal equipment and issues it to volunteer fire departments for fire suppression.
- Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness
 - LDAF is tasked by the Governor's Office as the lead agency to coordinate the tasks of the primary emergency support function (ESF-4, fire-fighting services). LDAF works in conjunction with the State Fire Marshall's Office.

MANAGEMENT:

- Forest management assistance to private landowners (management plans, recommendations, & prescribed burning)
- Administers Forestry Productivity Program which provides cost-share assistance for reforestation to Louisiana landowners
- Southern Pine Beetle detection and suppression
- Technical assistance for all federal cost-share programs in Forestry
 - Forestry Incentives Program FIP
 - Conservation Reserve Program CRP
 - Environmental Quality Incentives Program EQIP

- Administration & delivery of Forestry Best Management Practices (BMP) implementation, monitoring, and training
- Forest Stewardship Program encouraging sustainable multiple use management of forest lands.
- Severance Tax compilation and reporting of total timber production and prices for setting stumpage values. Also produce and publish the Quarterly Market Report of Timber prices for use by private landowners and forest industry.
- Alexander State Forest and Indian Creek Recreation Area
 - Recreation area is one of most heavily used in the state
 - State Forest supplies forest sales income to agency budget and provides training and demonstration opportunities in addition to recreation and hunting.
- Timber management assistance on all public lands owned by the state.
- Monitoring of timber harvesting activities along streams in the State Scenic Rivers Program.

INFORMATION & EDUCATION:

- Urban Forestry assistance to communities
 - Technical assistance
 - Grant programs that deliver federal funds to Louisiana communities
- Project Learning Tree conservation education program
 - Louisiana's program has won national awards and places in top tier of states
- Louisiana Forestry Teacher Tour (forestry workshop to educate teachers in forestry practices, management, reforestation, utilization, and other issues that face the forestry industry)
- Deliver presentations to students, organizations and communities & bring specialized programs, such as Smokey Bear & Firewise to individual schools
- Wildland Urban Interface
 - Training of Volunteer Fire Department of "at risk" areas
- Safety Training for Department Personnel
 - Incident Command System (ICS) for disaster response teams within state
 - Safety training and use of equipment in order to reduce Risk Management premiums
- Promotion of Wildfire Prevention Programs
- Promotion of Forest Laws
- Promotion of Forestry Productivity Program (FPP)
- Promotion of Louisiana Tree Seedling Nurseries and sales
- Public Education – Maintaining & updating publications & posters to increase public knowledge and awareness in forest protection, management, reforestation and general forestry
- Trees & Trails of Louisiana- program to help establish environmental education trails for public use
- Louisiana school Adopt-a-Tree program - Plant trees at state schools along with educating youth about the importance of trees throughout the state.
- Review, approve and submit Tree City USA and Tree Line USA applications to the National Arbor Day Foundation
- Coordinate the Arbor Day Poster contest, submit state winner to the National Arbor Day Foundation

REFORESTATION:

- Produce inexpensive, quality tree seedlings for landowners through three nurseries and three seed orchards.
- Forest Tree Improvement Program to insure a superior seed source for Louisiana forest landowners.
 - Manage 3 Seed Orchards with over 675 acres in production.
- Tree Seedling Nurseries produce pine, hardwood, and wildlife species seedlings for sale at cost to Louisiana landowners.
 - 40 million pine seedlings produced annually
 - 4 million hardwood seedlings produced annually

ENFORCEMENT:

- Responsible for the protection of life and property from forestry related crimes including arson, timber theft, forestry equipment theft & vandalism in Louisiana.

The Constitutional mandates that govern the operation of the Office of Forestry are outlined below:

Chapter 1, R.S. 3:17

Office of Forestry shall adopt & promulgate voluntary rules and regulations to authorize and promote the continued use of prescribed burning and offer workshops to certify prescribed burners.

Chapter 28, R.S. 3:4271

The mission of the Louisiana Office of Forestry is to protect, conserve and replenish the natural resources of the state.

Chapter 28, R.S. 3:4276, No. 5 - To take such action as is authorized by law to prevent and extinguish forest fires;

Chapter 28, R.S. 3: 4276, No. 6 – Enforce laws pertaining to forest woodlands and recommend prosecutions for violations;

Chapter 28, R.S. 3: 4276, No. 7 – Carry on educational work in the interest of forest conservation;

Chapter 28, R.S. 3: 4276, No. 8 – Cooperate with private timber owners in laying plans for protection, management, and replacement of forests, and in aiding them to form protective associations;

Chapter 28, R.S. 3: 4276, No. 9 – Examine all timbered lands belonging to the state and report to the commission upon their timber condition and actual value, and also whether some of these lands may not be held as state forests;

Chapter 28, R.S. 3: 4276, No. 10 – Be responsible for protection and management of lands donated to or purchased by the state for forestry preserves and all lands reserved as state forests;

Chapter 28, R.S. 3: 4276, No. 11 – Make statistics of forest conditions, resources, and injuries;

Chapter 28, R.S. 3: 4276, No. 12 – Conduct experiments in tree planting and note the effect of grazing and turpentine and other lines of forest work.

Chapter 28, R.S. 3: 4282 – The state forester shall prepare and distribute for posting and display notices printed in large letters calling attention to the destruction caused by fire and to the forest fire laws and penalties for their violation.

Chapter 28, R.S. 3:4301-4302 – The Office of Forestry shall establish and operate at least one nursery in North La. and one nursery in South La. to furnish Louisiana landowners forest tree seedlings from the Office of Forestry's nurseries.

Chapter 28, R.S. 3:4303 – Until otherwise prescribed by law the Commission shall fix the value of severed forest products and timber upon which the tax herein provided is levied, which shall be at the market price at the time and place where severed and which shall be approved by the governing authority of the parish and the Louisiana Tax Commission.

Chapter 28, R.S. 3:4321 – The Office of Forestry shall utilize Forest Protection Fund for acquisition and maintenance of equipment for protection of forestland from damage by fire and other causes.

Chapter 28, R.S. 3:4381-4384 – Authorizes the Louisiana Office of Forestry to provide technical assistance to urban areas with respect to urban forestry and otherwise to provide with respect thereto.

Chapter 28, R.S. 3:4410-4416 – Authorizes the Office of Forestry to establish rules and administer the Forest Productivity Fund to provide cost share assistance to Louisiana landowners through cooperative agreements.

Section 2: Efficiency and Benchmarking

The operation of the Indian Creek Recreational Area at Woodworth is an auxiliary program of the Office of Forestry and is currently expending more funds than the gate receipts bring in. The park is very well utilized in the central part of the state but one of two things needs to happen. The campsite & utilization prices need to be drastically increased so the expenses can be completely covered by the gate receipts; or, the park needs to be brought into Forestry's operational budget so the shortfalls can be covered with state funds instead of the park being funded solely by revenue generated.

Section 3: Outsourcing and Privatization

The operation of the Indian Creek Recreational Area at Woodworth is an auxiliary program of the Office of Forestry and is currently expending more funds than the gate receipts bring in. The park is very well utilized in the central part of the state. Two options for dealing with these shortages were discussed in section 2 above. A third option would be to make the operation of the park available to the Town of Woodworth through a cooperative agreement if they were interested. If the park is forced to close due to budget reductions to the Office of Forestry, the Town of Woodworth would lose all of the revenue generated by campers purchasing gasoline, groceries, & other supplies. For that reason, they may be willing to assume the expenses associated with the operation of the park, even though gate receipts wouldn't equal cost. This outsourcing should also limit the liability to the Office of Forestry & the Town of Woodworth would also become responsible for maintenance costs and utilities in the park. Because the park is a part of the State Forest, the cooperative agreement would have to clearly state that the Office of Forestry retains the property and the responsibility for all forest management activities within park boundaries.

Section 4: Information Technology Integration

The Office of Forestry recently added a GIS section to assist with tracking all of our operations spatially. Many of the Federal Grants we receive are now requiring this spatial data to be reported as part of the reimbursement process. This amounts to 4-6 million dollars annually. This spatial data also allows us to more easily interface with other state agencies like Wildlife & Fisheries, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Natural Resources, and Louisiana State University/Ag Center that we share projects with.

Section Five: Elimination of Duplicative and Unnecessary Services

Office of Forestry is not constitutionally or statutorily mandated to operate the Indian Creek Recreational Area; however, it is a part of the State Forest which we are mandated to protect and manage. The recreation area is one of the most heavily used in the state and gives us an opportunity to demonstrate to the public what a properly managed forest can look like. As long as the Office of Forestry retains ownership of the property and rights to manage the forest, the constitutional mandate would be fulfilled and a state agency like State Parks or a municipality like the Town of Woodworth could assume actual park operation.

Although the Office of Forestry cooperates with several local, state, and federal agencies, we each fill individual niches within those cooperative endeavors and there is no overlap or duplication of services.

Section 6: Civil Service and Employee Benefits

Office of Forestry is not currently considering any initiatives or ideas relating to employee benefits or employee regulations although budget reductions are making us consider possible layoffs.

Section Seven: Studies and other Resources

The Office of Forestry recently participated in a performance audit conducted by the Legislative Auditors office. The results of that audit are attached to this survey as Appendix 1.

The Office of Forestry also recently submitted our Annual Management and Program Report (AMPAR), Fiscal Year 2007-2008. The accomplishment responses and strategic plan responses are attached to this survey as Appendix 2.

Section Eight: Agency Best Practices

The Office of Forestry is currently compiling workload and accomplishment statistics to determine if there are any programs or services that can be eliminated or reduced to allow us to streamline operations and meet the level of funding budgeted following this year's reductions. The Office of Forestry's northern districts' workload is heavier in the area of forest management and our southern districts' workload is heavier in the area of wildfire protection and suppression. However, the programs and services currently provided by us are all tied to Constitutional mandates in some form or fashion and we are expected to offer each of those services in every part of the state. Our field staff is not specialized and is expected to perform whichever services are requested in their respective areas.

Since the Office of Forestry is mandated & expected to provide all services in every part of the state, our only means of dealing with budget reductions is by reducing staff which will drastically limit the level of those services we are able to provide. The Office of Forestry is currently analyzing and mapping how best to reassign the personnel remaining after the necessary layoffs take place to meet as many of our goals as possible.



LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

July 9, 2008

The Honorable Joel T. Chaisson, II,
President of the Senate The Honorable Jim
Tucker, Speaker of the House of
Representatives

Dear Senator Chaisson and Representative Tucker:

This report provides the results of our performance audit of the Office of Forestry within the Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry (LDAF). The audit was conducted under the provisions of Title 24 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, as amended.

The report contains our findings, conclusions, and recommendations on the Office of Forestry's management of its personnel, equipment, and budgetary resources. Appendix A contains LDAF's response. I hope this report will benefit you in your legislative decision-making process.

We would like to express our appreciation to the management and staff of the Office of Forestry for their assistance during this audit.

Steve J. Theriot, CPA
Legislative Auditor

Sincerely

y,

SJT/sr

LDAF08

Office of Legislative Auditor

Steve J. Theriot, CPA, Legislative Auditor

Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry,
Office of Forestry



July 2008 Audit Control # 40070022

Executive Summary

We conducted a performance audit of the Office of Forestry, located within the Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry (LDAF). The objective of this audit and overall results are summarized below.

Objective: Is the Office of Forestry effectively managing its personnel, equipment, and budgetary resources?

Results: Although there have been improvements since this audit began, the Office of Forestry (Forestry) needs stronger management processes to ensure that it effectively manages its personnel, equipment, and budgetary resources. Our audit findings describe issues the new LDAF administration and Forestry need to address to ensure the office manages its resources effectively and accomplishes its mission to protect, conserve, and replenish the forest resources of the state. These findings are as follows:

- ☒ Forestry officials have had limited decision-making authority over the management of their resources.
- ☒ Forestry officials' current decision-making authority over the management of their resources is not defined.
- ☒ Forestry officials have not had the information necessary to effectively manage their resources.
- ☒ Some Forestry employees are receiving supplemental hazardous duty pay despite not qualifying for such pay.
- ☒ Because of their limited decision-making authority, Forestry officials do not adequately collect or use performance data to manage resources.

Audit Initiation, Scope and Methodology

We conducted this performance audit under the provisions of Title 24 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, as amended. Louisiana Revised Statute (R.S.) 24:522 requires, in part,

that the legislative auditor establish a schedule of performance audits to ensure that a least one performance audit is completed and published for each executive department agency within a seven-year period beginning with the 1997-98 fiscal year. In accordance with this requirement, the legislative auditor developed a plan scheduling a performance audit of the LDAF. The scheduling of this audit was approved by the Legislative Audit Advisory Council on July 30, 2003.

In consultation with the new LDAF commissioner, we decided to focus our audit on the effectiveness with which the department manages its resources. We plan to conduct a series of audits within LDAF, each focusing on an individual office.

In conducting this audit, we followed the generally accepted government auditing standards as promulgated by the Comptroller General of the United States. To answer our objective, we performed the following audit steps:

- ☒ Researched state law, the administrative code, executive budget documents, and the LDAF strategic plan to determine Forestry's legal authority, responsibilities, mission, goals, and objectives
- ☒ Interviewed Forestry officials (associate state forester, branch chiefs, and district managers) regarding management of the office's personnel, equipment, and budgetary resources
- ☒ Interviewed other key personnel within LDAF's Office of Management and Finance (e.g., Human Resources, Property Management) regarding issues related to Forestry's management of its personnel, equipment, and budgetary resources
- ☒ Interviewed relevant agencies within the Division of Administration (e.g., Louisiana Property Assistance Agency, Office of Risk Management) regarding issues related to Forestry's management processes
- ☒ Obtained and reviewed data from Forestry and Office of Management and Finance regarding Forestry's personnel, equipment, budget, and federal grants
- ☒ Toured Forestry District 1 in Hammond, Louisiana
- ☒ Attended a meeting of the Louisiana Forestry Commission
- ☒ Obtained and reviewed information on best practices in government from the Advisory Services Division within the Louisiana Legislative Auditor and from Louisiana's Office of Planning and Budget

Appendix A contains LDAF's response to this report.

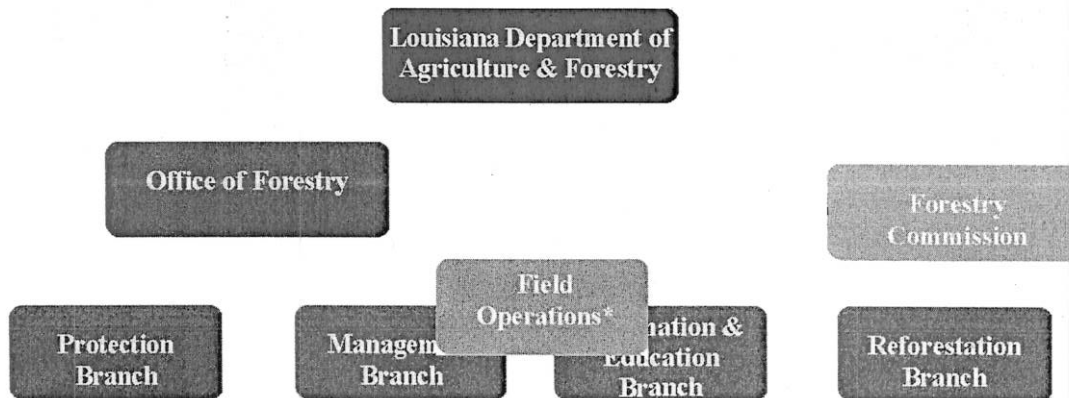
Overview of the Office of Forestry

Legal Authority. According to R.S. 36:628(F), the Office of Forestry, under the direction of the LDAF commissioner, is responsible for performing the functions of the state relating to the practice of forestry, in accordance with the policies established by the Forestry Commission.

R.S. 36:802.10 provided for the transfer of both the Office of Forestry and the Forestry Commission from the Department of Natural Resources to LDAF in 1986.

Mission and Organizational Structure. The mission of the Office of Forestry is to protect, conserve, and replenish the forest resources of the state. The Office of Forestry accomplishes its mission through four main branches (see Exhibit 1). These branches are Protection, Management, Information & Education, and Reforestation.

Exhibit 1 Organizational Structure of the Office of Forestry



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by the Office of Forestry.

*Field Operations includes the eight Forestry district offices, three nurseries, two seed orchards, the Alexander State Forest, and the Indian Creek Recreation Area.

Functions and Responsibilities. Exhibit 2 on the following page summarizes the main functions and responsibilities of each Forestry branch.

**Exhibit 2 Office of Forestry Functions and
Responsibilities, by Branch**

Forestry Branch	Main Functions and Responsibilities*
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildfire protection, detection (e.g., aerial surveillance), and suppression throughout the state • Conduct enforcement/investigative functions with regard to arson and timber theft • Administer the Federal Excess Property Program
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct activities related to forest management including providing landowner assistance (e.g., management plans, timber marking, prescribed burning, etc.) • Administer federal and state cost-share programs • Prepare and collect data for statistical reports and forestry publications • Monitor forest health • Develop best management practices
Information & Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase public awareness of the value and management of Louisiana's natural resources and the need for improved forest management and protection from insects, disease, and fire • Administer programs such as Urban Forestry, Louisiana Firewise, Project Learning Tree, and the Louisiana Forestry's Teacher Tour
Reforestation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce inexpensive, quality tree seedlings for landowners through three nurseries and two seed orchards
<p>*Note: While not formally placed under a specific branch, the Office of Forestry is also responsible for managing the Alexander State Forest and Indian Creek Recreation Area located in Woodworth, Louisiana.</p> <p>Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by the Office of Forestry.</p>	

Personnel. As of January 2008, Forestry had approximately 313² full-time employees and 52 part-time seasonal employees. In addition to the state office in Baton Rouge, Forestry has eight district offices located throughout the state, three nurseries, and two seed orchards. The foresters in the district offices perform the functions for each of the four branches. For example, when not performing wildfire detection and suppression activities for the Protection branch, district foresters work with landowners to develop management plans for the Management branch, assist with various educational outreach activities for the Information & Education branch, or collect seed and distribute seedlings for the Reforestation branch.

Equipment. Forestry uses various types of equipment to accomplish its fire protection, detection, and suppression activities. Exhibit 3 on the following page lists Forestry's major firefighting equipment,⁴ as of February 2008.

² Of the 313 full-time employees, one employee was on leave until retirement, two employees were receiving worker's compensation, and four employees were on extended leave due to illness. ³ The part-time seasonal employees assist the nurseries and seed orchards annually from approximately December through March and July through September. ⁴ The total in Exhibit 3 does not include the fleet vehicles or non-firefighting equipment assigned to Forestry.

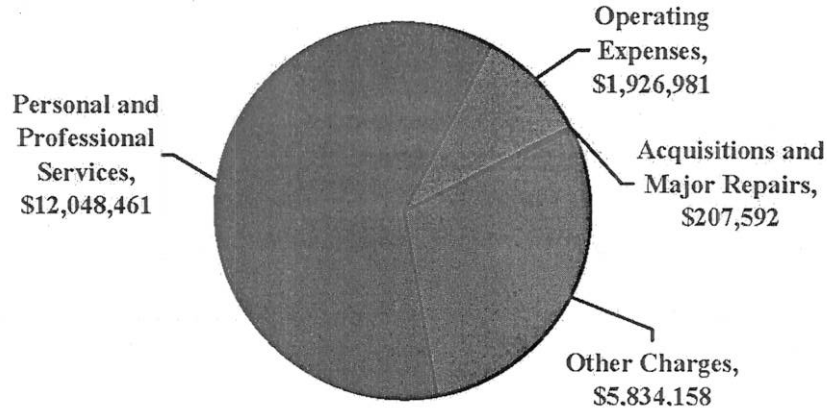
**Exhibit 3 Office of Forestry
Major Firefighting Equipment**

Type of Equipment	Quantity
Model 650 Bulldozers	96
Transport Trucks (for Model 650 Bulldozers)	96
Model 750 Bulldozers	8
Transport Trucks (for Model 750 Bulldozers)	8
Brush Trucks	17
Airplanes	20
Total of Major Equipment	245
Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staffing using information obtained from the Office of Forestry and the Office of Management and Finance.	

Budget.

Forestry's operating budget for fiscal year 2008 is approximately \$20 million. Exhibit 4 shows the breakdown of this budget.

**Exhibit 4 Office of Forestry Existing
Operating Budget as of 12/01/07**



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information obtained from the FY 2009 Executive Budget Supporting Document.

⁵ The \$20 million does not include the approximately \$5.3 million in federal hurricane supplemental grants available to Forestry during fiscal year 2008.

Objective: Is the Office of Forestry effectively managing its personnel, equipment, and budgetary resources?

Although there have been improvements since this audit began, Forestry needs stronger management processes to ensure that it effectively manages its personnel, equipment, and budgetary resources. The following describes our audit findings and includes recommendations that are intended to assist the office in strengthening its management processes.

Forestry officials have had limited decision-making authority over the management of their resources.

Forestry officials have not been given the authority to make decisions regarding their personnel, equipment, and budgetary resources. Instead, the previous LDAF administration made these decisions with little or no input from Forestry officials. As a result, it has been difficult for Forestry officials to effectively manage their resources and perform the functions of the state relating to the practice of forestry.

Personnel. According to Forestry officials, the previous LDAF administration made decisions regarding when to hire, who to hire, and where to allocate staff with little consideration given to Forestry's input on the staffing needs of particular districts. Over time, the number of firefighters in some of the forestry districts became critically low. To alleviate this shortage, the department used one-time federal hurricane supplemental money during fiscal year 2006 to hire full-time, permanent firefighters. Forestry is currently using two federal hurricane supplemental grants to fund the salaries of 31 full-time personnel. Both of these grants will expire on September 30, 2008. Combined, these grants fund approximately \$787,000 in salaries, annually.

Equipment. According to Forestry officials, the previous LDAF administration also made decisions regarding when to purchase forestry equipment and the quantity/type of equipment to purchase (e.g., number of bulldozers, types of bulldozer blades, etc.) with little input, if any, from Forestry management. In addition, the previous LDAF administration used Forestry equipment, and sometimes personnel, to assist with construction activities. These activities were outside of Forestry's mission to protect, conserve, and replenish the forest resources of the state. Unless there was an immediate fire-related need, Forestry management said that it could not refuse to provide resources. According to an LDAF official, the new administration ceased the practice of using non-maintenance personnel to perform construction-related activities in January 2008.

Budget. Forestry's lack of decision-making authority also extended to the office's budgetary resources. For example, during the fall of 2007, Forestry generated \$1.8 million by sending firefighters to Georgia to assist with wildfire suppression. At the beginning of this audit, Forestry officials were unsure if the previous LDAF administration would place the \$1.8 million Forestry generated into the office's budget or if the department would use the money for another purpose.⁶

⁶ The new administration placed the \$1.8 million Forestry generated in the office's budget in January 2008.

For Forestry to accomplish its goals, its management structure needs to have the authority to fully participate in decisions regarding the allocation and use of its personnel, equipment, and budgetary resources. A lack of such authority can result in ineffective decision-making, inefficient use of resources, low morale, and an atmosphere of mistrust and uncertainty. In addition, without an appropriate level of decision-making authority, Forestry cannot ensure that it achieves its mission nor can the department justly hold it accountable for doing so.

Recommendation 1: The new LDAF administration should assess the decision-making authority assigned to Forestry to determine if management has the appropriate and necessary level of decision-making authority to ensure the office achieves its mission.

Summary of Management's Response: LDAF agrees with this recommendation and has already increased Forestry's participative decision-making authority.

Forestry officials' current decision-making authority over the management of resources is not defined.

Neither LDAF nor Forestry has formal policies and/or procedures that define Forestry officials' current roles, responsibilities, or decision-making authority. LDAF's only manual is an employee manual that pertains to personnel issues such as attendance and leave policy, promotions, benefits, and grievances. Forestry's last set of formal policies and procedures was revised by the Louisiana Forestry Commission in 1977, prior to Forestry being part of LDAF.

Formal policies and procedures provide management with guidance on how to effectively manage its resources. This guidance helps ensure standardization and consistency in operations. It also helps ensure that organizations do not lose information regarding management processes when key employees retire.⁷ Forestry experienced such a loss during the first half of fiscal year 2008 when both the state forester⁷ and associate state forester⁸ retired. These retirements combined with the administration change in January 2008 and a lack of formal policies and procedures left Forestry officials with little guidance on how to manage their resources.

Recommendation 2: Forestry should work with the new administration to develop, implement, and regularly update policies and procedures that support its mission and address essential management functions at both the office and district level. These policies and procedures should include areas related to budget, personnel, and equipment management.

Summary of Management's Response: LDAF agrees with this recommendation and is assessing and updating policies and procedures to better meet the needs of Forestry and the rest of the department.

⁷ The previous state forester took leave beginning 10/24/07 and retired on 12/28/07. The Louisiana Forestry Commission did not appoint the new state forester until March 2008. ⁸ The previous associate state forester took leave beginning 7/2/07 and retired on 10/5/07. The previous LDAF administration appointed the current associate state forester in June 2007.

Recommendation 3: The policies and procedures Forestry and the new administration develop should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of Forestry management, including its decision-making authority.

Summary of Management's Response: LDAF agrees with this recommendation. The department is currently modifying its policies and procedures to give Forestry decision-making authority and the responsibility that accompanies this authority. This same authority and responsibility will be given to each Office within the Department.

Forestry officials have not had the information necessary to effectively manage their resources.

To effectively manage its resources, Forestry needs access to reliable information in a timely and consistent manner. In the past, Forestry officials did not have the information they needed to effectively manage their resources. The following describes the issues the new LDAF administration and Forestry officials need to address regarding the availability and flow of budgetary and personnel information within the department.

Budget. According to officials in Forestry and the Office of Management and Finance (OMF), the previous LDAF administration did not give Forestry management at the state office information about the office's budget. Instead of routinely providing Forestry with budget updates, OMF contacted Forestry management when the office was running low on funds. Without current budget information, Forestry management cannot proactively and efficiently address funding-related issues that could impact the office's ability to accomplish its mission. Currently, the new LDAF administration is providing Forestry management with training on how to use the Integrated Statewide Information System (ISIS)⁹ so it can track/monitor Forestry's budget.

In addition, the district managers do not receive the budget information they need to formally track their districts' major expenses such as equipment repair reports and fuel usage reports. Of the eight district managers, one said his secretary annually receives a copy of the budget, five said they have never seen their districts' budgets, and two said they have not seen their districts' budgets in several years. One district manager stated that district managers were discouraged from asking for additional budget information under the previous LDAF administration. According to their Department of Civil Service job descriptions, however, district managers are to "*assume responsibility for fiscal management of the district including budget preparation and oversight, preparation of requisitions and supervision of purchasing and other expenditures.*" District managers cannot accomplish their duties if they do not receive current budget information in a timely and consistent manner.

Personnel. In addition to lacking budget information, Forestry officials do not have the information they need to effectively manage personnel. For example, when the audit began, Forestry did not have accurate organizational charts or information on the number of funded

⁹ ISIS is an integrated information system that handles the majority of state agencies' accounting processes.

vacancies within the office. Forestry management, in consultation with the audit team, developed accurate organizational charts to help them monitor and manage the allocation of staff throughout the state. As a result, Forestry management identified three LDAF employees who, while organizationally located within Forestry, do not work for Forestry.

Recommendation 4: Forestry should determine the types of information it needs to effectively manage its budgetary and personnel resources and coordinate with OMF to ensure it receives this information in a timely and consistent manner.

Summary of Management's Response: LDAF agrees with this recommendation. Forestry has developed organizational charts and procedures to better track personnel placement and needs. Additionally, LDAF has granted Forestry officials access to reports on ISIS that will allow Forestry to track the office's budget. Starting with the 2009 fiscal year, Forestry will give districts their own budgets and expect the districts to remain within their budgets.

Recommendation 5: The new administration should ensure the district managers receive the training and resources they need to manage their budgetary resources.

Summary of Management's Response: LDAF agrees with this recommendation. Forestry administration will receive access to in depth budget information and will be trained to use this information to analyze their budgetary status. This administration will use that training to help district managers establish procedures to track their spending to help them remain within their allotted budget.

Some Forestry employees are receiving supplemental hazardous duty pay despite not qualifying for such pay.

We found that seven Forestry employees are receiving supplemental hazardous duty pay¹⁰ despite their regular job duties not requiring the performance of fire detection/suppression activities. The Department of Civil Service has approved the specific forestry job titles eligible for supplemental hazardous duty pay. LDAF's policy on hazardous duty pay further requires that those who receive such pay perform fire detection/suppression activities on a regular basis. Specifically, the policy states that supplemental hazardous duty pay shall not be granted to or continued for any employee in an approved job title *"whose regular job assignments are tasks which do not require the performance of fire detection/suppression activities."*

Human Resources, within OMF, assigns supplemental hazardous duty pay based solely on an employee's job title. However, there is no communication between Human Resources and Forestry regarding the regular job duties of employees receiving supplemental hazardous duty pay. As a result, there are no controls to protect the department against the occurrence of such erroneous payments. Forestry officials informed us that they are working to correct this problem.

¹⁰ Employees who receive supplemental hazardous duty pay receive an additional \$1.73/hour which totals approximately \$300 per month.

Recommendation 6: Forestry officials should immediately stop non-eligible employees from receiving supplemental hazardous duty pay.

Summary of Management's Response: LDAF agrees with this recommendation and, effective June 9, 2008, has stopped giving supplemental hazardous duty pay to these non-eligible employees.

Recommendation 7: The new LDAF administration should consult with its legal counsel regarding the need, if any, for Forestry employees to reimburse the department for the supplemental hazardous duty pay they received erroneously.

Summary of Management's Response: LDAF agrees with this recommendation and consulted its legal counsel. The LDAF legal counsel determined that, if the department stopped paying the hazardous duty pay immediately, those employees would not need to repay the past hazardous duty pay they previously received. The hazardous duty pay they received is the result of a misinterpretation of the policy by the previous administration and is not the fault of the employees.

Recommendation 8: Forestry should coordinate with Human Resources to establish a formal process for assigning supplemental hazardous duty pay to ensure such pay is allocated according to department policy.

Summary of Management's Response: LDAF agrees with this recommendation. The supplemental hazardous duty pay policy was incorrectly applied by the previous administration with regard to staff assignments. Forestry and Human Resources will review the assignment of supplemental hazardous duty pay for new employees before LDAF grants this pay in the future.

Because of their limited decision-making authority, Forestry officials do not adequately collect or use performance data to manage resources.

Forestry collects performance indicator information regarding its protection, management, information/education, and reforestation functions from the districts on a monthly basis. The performance data Forestry collects is thorough and relevant to its mission. However, according to Forestry management, some districts do not submit their reports in a timely manner. In addition, Forestry does not store this information in a central location. For example, while wildfire data is available on the LDAF intranet, the Management branch keeps its data on an employee's computer and the Enforcement branch keeps its data in a file cabinet. As a result, not all performance data is easily accessible or readily available to Forestry management.

Although Forestry collects performance data on all its major functions, it does not use this information to monitor performance or guide management decision-making. According to *Manageware*,¹¹ some benefits of performance accountability are as follows:

- ☒ Allows more accurate assessment of the resources needed to support activities
- ☒ Drives effective allocation of existing resources
- ☒ Increases credibility when requesting new resources
- ☒ Supports informed decision-making
- ☒ Encourages delegation rather than micro-management
- ☒ Motivates employees and makes everyone more accountable

By using performance data, Forestry could improve performance accountability and increase management effectiveness within all branches and divisions. For example, Forestry does not currently have formal staffing criteria or guidelines for the districts. Instead, Forestry management bases the districts' staffing levels on professional judgment and budgetary resources. By using the performance data it already collects, Forestry management could ensure that it is allocating its personnel in the most effective manner.

In addition, the use of performance data would also assist Forestry management to conduct needs assessments and ensure it has the necessary equipment and personnel to accomplish its mission. For example, Forestry management has expressed a need for a GIS (geographic information system) specialist as many of the federal cost-share programs in which the office participates now require spatial data. Without a GIS specialist to publish spatial data, Forestry will not be eligible for some federal cost-share funds. Performance data would provide Forestry management with support when requesting this position.

Recommendation 9: Forestry should ensure that its performance data is collected and reported in a timely manner.

Summary of Management's Response: LDAF agrees with this recommendation. Forestry officials have since met with the district managers to clearly define reporting requirements and expectations. Compliance will be assured.

¹¹ Manageware is the state's management manual that describes Louisiana's integrated processes for policy development, strategic planning, program budgeting, capital budgeting, and performance accountability.